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The Champion of The Cross

47. 1860.

THE

CHAMPION

OF

THE CROSS.

An Allegory.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE following little Allegory, is written chiefly to exemplify the interior life of a Christian. To shew the struggles and temptations occurring from childhood to old age; and the aspirations after higher and holier things which make up the contemplative portion of it.

Two characters are introduced; one, a person who has served GOD from youth to old age, without falling away: whose end therefore is peaceful. The other, one who has fallen away in his youth; and who, when restored, is far less perfect than his companion; who is in consequence far more subject to excitement, but whose end is Martyrdom. Nor does it seem wrong to assign to the more perfect character a peaceful end, when we reflect upon the latter days of the holy St. John: while St. Peter's end is martyrdom.

Again, the blending of what is real with what is allegorical is not unnatural; for who can tell in the things around him how much is reality, how much mystery? The whole world, if we look at it in one point of view, is one vast allegory.

These considerations may serve to explain, in a general way, things which are not explained in the notes.

EASTER, 1847.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE.
CHAP. I.	The Lake	1
II.	The Battle	9
III.	The Pilgrims	18
IV.	The Hermit	26
V.	The Four Visions	35
VI.	The Dangerous Valley . . .	47
VII.	Conclusion	57
Notes		63

THE

CHAMPION OF THE CROSS.

AN ALLEGORY.

The Lake.

THE lake lay sleeping calm and clear,
Reflecting Heaven; while far and near,
Stillness hung o'er the scene; the morn
Just 'gan the Eastern sky to adorn
With purpling light, in endless flow
Of varied shades: with warmer glow
The burning morn-star shone, when, lo!
Clad in a robe of purest white,
Descending from a mountain's height,

(Which tower'd o'er the Lake, and cast
A long extended shade and vast,)
A venerable Priest came, slow
And pensive to the Lake below;
(Which now, amid the morning-light,
Like a vast ruby sparkled bright,
And with the blushing East imbued
So deeply, that it seemed like blood.)
Calm was his mien, while, round his face,
In sweet unutterable grace,
Heaven hovered. To the silent shore
He came, and from a lofty tower,
Built on the mountain-top, a knight,
Brave and courageous in the fight,
And wife, and child, and other three
Came down to meet him. 'Neath a tree,
On which the dew like jewels hung
In crimson drops, they stood, and sung
A hymn, so sweet, so thrilling sweet,
Like Angels' song it seemed, and meet

For heaven's blest courts. The holy Priest,
When their seraphic song had ceased,
Took in his arms the infant child,
Which fondly looked at him and smiled,
And thrice within the waters blue
Plunged the babe; all then renew
Their solemn song; and not alone,
The lark has caught the rapturous tone,
And joins his little voice to theirs,
And in their exultation shares.

And now, behold! from heaven's height,
In shining garments, pure and white,
An Angel came, and joined the throng,
Ere they had ended all their song.

Then spake the holy Priest; each word
So sweet, that every one who heard
Had thought the Angel spake, but he
Was listening too, in ecstasy.
"Thy race thou hast begun, sweet child,"
Thus he began in words most mild,

" Continue to the end, and then
A glorious Crown shall be thy gain:
Go, where thy parents' guidance leads,
Across yon pleasant flowery meads;
Then, having pass'd yon hillock's height,
Thou shalt engage in mortal fight:
Press on, the road is straight, turn not,
For burning sands to cooling grot:
Go on, to where yon Cross gleams far,
Keep that in view, when furious war
Wields her rude weapons round thy head;
Forget it not;—or thou art dead.
And place this Cross beside thy heart,
Fear not its pain, but love its smart;
For when thy course is o'er, and thou
Dost meekly 'fore thy Sovereign bow,
A sign of triumph it shall prove,
And before Him, proclaim thy love.
Fight the good fight of Faith, faint not,
Nor ever think thyself forgot."

So spake the holy man: then gave
The infant to the champion brave:
Then the bright angel guarded o'er
The gentle infant evermore.

Far, where sweet Nature's carpet bright
Gave pleasure to th' entranced sight,
Sown o'er with flowers, where hedges green
Covered with eglantine are seen,
Around whose sharp-thorn'd branches twine
The many-flowered sweet woodbine,
His parents led him, strengthening fast:
Ere they had half the distance past
Over the flowery way, the child
Would run and gather flowers wild,
Without his parents' leave; but tears
Sprang from his eyes, whene'er he hears
That he hath done amiss; then, he
Goes on his way more guardedly.

Thus o'er the verdant mead they pass,
And reach the hillock's brow, (where grass

Less beautiful, and flowers more rare
Became) and on the summit, fair
And beautiful, a temple rose;
Of marble built, which with the snows
In whiteness might compare; the walls
Like silver, when the moon-beam falls
Upon them, when the sun, like gold.
New beauties every-where unfold,
When, from the valley mists arise
At morn and cloud the smiling skies,
Lifted from earth the building seems,
Like vision pictured in our dreams;—
Or, when the eve, in blue mists clad,
Drinks of the sun-beam and is glad,
An amber palace, high and wide,
Seems on the purple mist to ride.

With lowly thoughts they enter, where
The Western door, with carvings rare
Of saints, and canopies, and flowers,
And beauteous tracery, all hours

Stands open; and with rev'rence bow
To the blest altar, as they go
Along the nave; each jewelled light
Adds gloom; amid the colours bright
Apostles, virgins, martyrs bold,
Angels, and saints, and prophets old
In order stand; but where the morn
Pours in her light, the Body torn
Of the blest SAVIOUR is portrayed;
And underneath, how He was laid
Within the tomb. In robes of white,
Knelt a vast multitude, in sight
Like the bright hosts of heaven: then one
In holy robes adorned, alone
Gave them his benediction. Now
Their hearts with living fervour glow:
All take their armour, one by one,
They, breastplate, sword, and helmet don,
With truth their loins are girt, their feet
Are shod with peace. And now to meet

Their adversary go. Alas!
How many seek with ease to pass
Through the hot contest, nor to oppose
The fiery weapons of their foes.

CHAPTER II.

The Battle.

But Vincent, clad in armour strong,
Goes valiantly the foes among,
Strong in his God, he trusts to prove
The power of His Almighty Love.

And now, with smiling looks, and sweet,
Comes Pleasure forth, around her feet
She scattered roses, near her sprung
Pale violets the grass among;
"Come, leave that hard and rugged path,
And walk upon my flowers;" she saith.

He heeded not her wiles, but went
Along the rugged road, content
To suffer here. Her roses fair,
Which late with sweetness filled the air,
Fade; the scented violets too,
Put off their robe of pallid blue;
And dying, round her feet are laid:
And in their stead, the dark night-shade,
And then, the deadly Aconite
Bring deep, tremendous, awful night.
Then, on and on, the champion goes
Right valiantly against his foes:
Who like a storm-raised cloud assail,
Thick as the thunder-caused hail.
And, first of all that raging storm,
Comes leer-eyed Lust in apish form,
Low grovelling in earth; next, Pride
In close companionship doth ride;
Lofty his mien, his voice, his head,
And self supplied each word he said;

Ambition next, with grasping hand,
And eyes that wandered o'er each land;
Next burning Wrath; and vengeful Hate;
And Envy, with his hell-born mate,
Vile Scorn; and Jealousy came then,
The bitter foe of high-soul'd men;
Then Luxury came softly drest,
In silk attire, and flowing vest;
And bloated Drunkenness deformed,
Who red with anger loudly stormed;
And Malice with his quick grey eye;
And sin-led Idleness hard by;
Hypocrisy, in fair disguise,
Full of iniquity and lies;
And last, with tottering steps and slow,
Bent down to earth and stooping low,
Came chilling Avarice; whose eye
Regarded not the deep-drawn sigh
Of sorrowing poverty, or pain,
But all things near he turned to gain.

Fierce raged that dreadful fight, I ween,
Buckler, and helm, and targe were seen
Shattered and broken, fearful sound
The savage war-cries all around;
For men with devils war and fight:
Ah! bitter is that hellish spite
Against man, fierce and full of spleen;
And many a high-soul'd man is seen
To quail and bow before that storm,
Filled with terror and alarm.
Then, through the dreadful hurricane,
Amid the wounded and the slain,
Goes Vincent; round his head, in showers,
The hellish host its missiles pours:
His burnished shield of heavenly blue
Resists the weapons of that crew.
Though Lust, and Hate, and Envy, tried,
They were disarmed and dashed aside;
Then Scorn and Idleness came on,
And then Ambition all alone:—

Wearied, his strength began to fail,
His courage 'fore his foes to quail.
His right arm sunk; he ceased to wield
His sabre keen; his Heaven-made shield
Hung careless on his left; his breast
Seemed with his armour sore opprest;
His burning feet, upon the sand,
No longer seemed at his command:—
His enemies his state espied,
And rushed upon his naked side;
But, on his knees, he humbly prayed
For power from Heaven, for instant aid;—
Weaker his arm, his soul more faint,
More earnest was his strong complaint:
Alas; the enemy comes on,
And he is nearly now undone.
When suddenly his Angel came,
Wrapt in a burning glorious flame,
And whispered gentle words of peace,
And bids his fearful sighs to cease:

And then a holy priest came there,
(Before him in the joyous air,
The holy Cross was raised,) who brought
The Strength that he so humbly sought.
He, girded close his armour, sings
The song of heaven; then fiercely flings
His heaven-attempered sword around
And hews his foes unto the ground.
Who quickly spread their wings, and flee,
When they the Cross before him see.
Nor, from the battle is he found
From danger free, nor free from wound;
For a deep gash was in his side,
Made by the poisoned spear of Pride;
Which festered long; and often pained
Him, while its evil power remained.
And now, afar, he sees his foes
Lead captive to eternal woes
Full many a soul; a knight was there,
With beaten head, and body bare,

Led captive furiously in chains,
Covered with wounds, and full of pains;
Yet, with a seeming merry face,
He stepped alone at rapid pace,
Nor seemed his gaping wounds to mind,
Which left a bloody track behind.
With shouts of triumph, breathing hell,
With many a piercing, fearful yell,
With scornful looks, and sulph'rous breath,
Poisoned with slow-consuming death,
They bear him off, along the road,
Fainting beneath the Wrath of God.
And now, the southern sky, with dark
And livid clouds was hung, and hark!
The muttering thunder rolls, now leaps
The rapid light, from clouds on heaps
Piled high; again the thunders roar,
And hail and rain in torrents pour
From the black clouds, marching on high,
Frowning with dreadful majesty.

The dense, and torpid, gloomy air
Can scarce their towering masses bear.
The awful stillness near now yields
To the rude storm, that o'er the fields
Comes raging on: before the blast
The elms their mighty branches cast,
Tossing, like tendrils of the vine,
Whose fearful arms around entwine
Their huge thick trunks, now low, now high,
Bowed to the earth, or 'gainst the sky
Waving in grandeur: and the rain
In rushing torrents bursts again.
From the electric vault, a crash,
Close following the light'ning's flash,
Tells of destruction near; an oak
Is shattered by the blazing stroke.
From branch to branch the crackling fire
Spreads swiftly, till the forest-sire
Is wrapt in flames, which high are spread
By eddying winds far overhead;

Till wild Commotion dances there,
Like vengeful spirit of the air.
And hither come that wicked band,
And at a little distance stand.
The knight, with iron fetters chained,
With fearful horrors sorely pained,
They bid advance;—tis vain to try
To break his bonds, and seek to fly:
Hemmed in by evil spirits, he
Cannot oppose their power, nor flee;
But shivering with anxious fear,
And unrelieved with e'er a tear,
Trembling, for pity from them prays
Beneath the devastating blaze:—
In vain,--the heavens their vengeance wreak,
Again the purple lightenings break,
Again they come with winged force;
And he is left a blackened corse.

CHAPTER III.

The Pilgrims.

Then Vincent climbs a steep ascent
And resteth there, being well nigh spent:
And, while at ease he rests awhile,
Sweet angels gather round and smile
To see his thoughts to things above,
Like morning lark, so sweetly move.
But looking up, he quickly sees
Beneath a row of tall lime trees
A man advancing slow, whose pace
Was halting, but his glowing face

Seemed half with sorrow, half with joy
O'erspread: and by his side a boy
Tripped o'er the grass right merrily,
And clapped his little hands in glee.
Then Vincent starting up in haste,
Address'd the strangers as they past;
"Stay strangers, stay," he cried, "Oh stay
Why have you come along this way?"
"We seek to gain the blessed place,
Where we shall clearly, Face to face,
See the great KING, Who meekly died
To save His lost ones," They replied.
"To that same Place, I hasten too,"
Vincent replied, "Alas! how few
From yon fierce strife, that come this way,
And hasten to the realms of Day.
But let us go together, friend,
Then we can each assistance lend
Unto the other, as we go.
But tell thy name." "'Tis Agatho"

The other said; together they
Descend, by an uneven way,
The mountain they had climbed: with care.
For many a dangerous rock was there.
Some hung suspended in the air
By curious art, while jewels rare
Gleamed brightly from them, to entrap,
Unheeding ones to some mishap;
And some with slippery moss were green;
And here and there, where once had been
A giant rock, a cavern dark
Stands wide; and, at the bottom, bark
Dogs of the wildest forms; from some
Mists issuing shed around their gloom.
Now here the road with rocks was torn,
Or nought was seen but long-spined thorn;
On either side a mountain stood,
All covered with a grim pine wood.
They walked with care. The blazing sun
Now to decline had just begun,

And sent his rays with burning heat;
When by the pathway stood a seat,
All rudely formed; a vine was made
To cast o'er-head a pleasant shade:
They, wearied with the toilsome way,
Thought here a little time to stay;
But scarce were seated, when there rose
A host of their malicious foes,
Encompassing the arbour round,
With silken chains at first they bound,
But iron quickly came behind;
With swiftness they their victims bind,
And soon had captive led, but they
Drank of a stream that ran that way,
That seemed to issue from a Rock.
Swiftly, their chains with sudden shock
Were rent; and they with thankfulness
Proceeded their good KING to bless
For this His aid in their distress.
The evil spirits took to flight

To the black palace of old night.
Calmly and slowly through the sky
The evening clouds come floating by,
Tinged by the setting sun's red beam,
While gently glides the crystal stream
To the deep murmuring Ocean. Stars
Light their pale lamps, and drive their cars
Through the dark vault of heaven, the moon,
Fair empress of the midnight noon,
Comes forth in all her glory, pale
Yet beautiful; while on each sail
That slowly glides along the sea,
Rising and falling heavily,
She pours her placid light; each wave
Which, then, with rolling deep, and grave,
Comes slowly on, drinks of her light,
And, for a moment, sparkling, bright,
Adds lustre to the calm still night.
Made thoughtful by the calm around,
They walk in silence, 'till the sound

Of distant bells is faintly heard:
And, then, upon a hill appeared
An ancient Abbey, from whose tower
The bells pealed forth at vesper-hour.
Now the rich peal, down through the dell,
Rolls in a deep melodious swell.
With quickened steps they tread along,
And haste to join the sacred throng,
To lift the high and holy song.

The service o'er, the brethren pray
That they will in the convent stay:
They bathe their wounds and wash their feet,
With fervent charity entreat
Again, that they will stay to share
With them the Bounties stored up there.

Devótion ruled that holy band,
And Prior Peace had next command,
Warm-hearted Hospitality
Was Cellarer, and Charity
Was Almoner, whose dove-like eye

Bid every fear at once to fly;
And Reverence as Sacrist cared,
Lest any one profanely dared
God's holy glorious House defile
With aught of sin, or action vile;
Simplicity and Sweetness stood,
When the deep tide of Music flowed
In sweet Gregorian tones along,
The leaders of the sacred song;
Austerity, with heaven-bent eye,
Had care of the Refectory.

Here, then, they stayed awhile to rest:
And in the sacred love increased,
Which taught them well the road to know
To the high City, from below.

Now they, when they prepare to leave,
The Abbot's benediction crave,
Who, with calm dignity, there laid
His holy hands upon their head,
And all the convent deeply grieve,

When they in sadness take their leave.
Now, many a mile in silence past,
Vincent to Agatho, at last,
Spoke thus: 'Good Agatho, I pray,
Let me the reasons (if I may,)
Know, wherefore you have come this way,
For we have walked together far,
But yet, I know not whence you are?'
Then Agatho replied, 'My tale
Indeed is short. My parents dwell
Within that tower o'er the Lake.—
While still a boy, the bonds I break
Of true obedience, and was ta'en
By the vile host, and well-nigh slain,
Yet One passed by, and took away
His servant from amidst the fray;
And gave me strength to run; yet said,
On me a punishment He laid,
And so in lameness I pursue
My journey till I met with you.'

CHAPTER IV.

The Hermit.

Thus on they past in converse deep,
And climbing up a mountain-steep
Entered a forest, where the trees,
When ruffled by the passing breeze,
Scarce let the mid-day in. A hind
Which left the very winds behind,
Past swiftly by; with panting side,
And crimsoned with a streaming tide
Of purple blood, and o'er a gulf,
That yawned with horrors, leaped; a wolf,

With blood stained lips, and fiery eyes,
With rapid step, and savage cries,
Which far resounded through the wood,
Came quickly on: he stopped,—stood
O'er the wild ravine, then along
Its brink he crept the trees among.
Then fiercely raised a sullen growl,
Increasing to a hideous howl:
And, disappointed of his prey,
With loitering steps he shrunk away.
Meanwhile, the hind, along a dell,
Proceeded to a rocky cell,
Where dwelt a holy hermit. They
Proceeded on their gloomy way,
Silent and slow; a tinkling bell
All sweetly on their senses fell;
Soft was its tone, the joyous air
Delighted through the wild to bear
Its holy sound, to distant cot;
Where, by the busy world forgot,

Some lonely widow humbly dwelt,
And ever at its bidding knelt.
Thus through the parting forest seen,
The holy man, with face serene
And full of heaven, called to prayer:
Then hastened they to worship there.

Their meek devotions o'er, he laid
Before them bread and fruits, and prayed
That they would of his humble fare
Partake, and rest a little there.

Then Vincent said, 'Pray, Father, tell
Thy name, who in this lowly cell
Dwellest in peace, in love, in prayer,
Far from the world's absorbing care?'
And he, with gentle smile replied
'I, in this cell, who here abide,
Am Contemplation; here with me
You, if you are prepared, shall see
Wonders of heaven, of earth around,
And of the secrets underground.'

'But first,' said Agatho, 'I pray,
Explain the wonder, which to-day
We saw within the woods; the hind,—
The wolf which followed quick behind,—
The dark ravine,—and why the wolf
Could not pass o'er the awful gulf.'
'It was an ardent soul, I ween,
That you have in the forest seen;
Which by the world was tortured sore;
But having gained the peaceful shore,
Where I and Penitence, and Prayer,
A holy round of duty share;
And, keeping by our heavenly art
The savage world far from the heart,
Shall lead him far along the road
That leads to blessedness, and God:
Here shall he rest. But rise, I pray,
I will conduct you on your way.'
And, having ended now their meal,
In humble thankfulness they kneel.

Then, as along the way he led,
He pointed to the flowers, and said,
'Consider these; their hues; and how
By GOD's Almighty Power they grow:
Behold! how those pale lilies fair
Their glories on the desert air
Scatter with ever lavish hand:
The virgin souls, who ever stand
Ready to do their LORD's command,
Are these; gentle, and undefiled,
That make the woods and deserts wild
Rejoice. Behold, that flow'ret pale;
The lovely lily of the vale,
How 'neath its broad green leaf it sinks,
And from the world's rude gazing shrinks;
And even blushes, if the ray
Of morning chance to pass this way.'
Thus telling, as they passed along,
Of violet's prayer, of hare-bell's song;
And how, from off the tender spray

Of some low tree, when even's ray
O'erspreads the earth with gold, the vale
Is filled by plaintive Philomel.
Or, when the misty morning grey
Yields to the rising King of day,
The sprightly lark's shrill-toned voice
Makes the dew-spangled fields rejoice;
Thus the sweet chant at eve ascends;
And, with the morn, the incense blends
Of early prayer. 'But see that flock!
There gathered, where the jutting rock
Throws a broad shade: that Shepherd too,
How gentle, merciful, and true!
See! how the ewes from fear of wrong
He guards; How gently those with young
He leads; the lambs within His breast,
In quiet confidence and rest,
With love He carries. Now the dove
Coos softly through the listening grove;
In peaceful love she dwells, nor wears

The chains of worldly, sinful cares.
See! how the scented crimson rose
Its perfume o'er the valley throws;
That bud, too, broken from the stem,
Fallen, and blooming in the stream;
How like the child, to whom 'tis given,
To bud on earth to bloom in heaven.'

They now the shady woodlands leave,
And, entering a darksome cave,
They tread along a spacious room
By nature formed; whose lofty dome,
Supported by the stalactites,
Glittered above their blazing lights.
'Hither,' the holy hermit said,
'The blessed saints for refuge fled:
Here many a prayer was offered up,
And they, who drank the martyr's cup,
Were buried here; and angels oft
Came down on pinions, white and soft,
And joined the spirit-stirring hymn:

While, far within the caverns dim,
It pealed away, re-echoing oft,
Now sinking low, now raised aloft;
Or fading, in the distance died,
Or seemed along the roof to glide,
Until the caverns all around
Rejoiced at the holy sound.
And, as the music soared along,
This was the holy Martyr's song,
"Hail, thou Eternal FATHER! whose blest
SON
Hath cheered with holy light
Our longing anxious sight;
Now that the burning West
Proclaims the hour of rest,
We praise, and magnify, the glorious
THREE,
The FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, ceaselessly.
Oh Thou! Who quickenst him who dies
The whole wide world Thee glorifies;

And ever shall Thy praise be sung,
With holy voice, and glowing tongue,
Sweet JESUS CHRIST, while ages endless run."*

* This is scarcely a translation, but the ideas are all taken from the following Hymn of the 1st, or 2nd Cen. preserved by St Basil. (Vid. Routh. Relliqu. Sacr. III. p. 299.)

ΦΩΣ ἱλαρὸν ἁγίας δόξης Ἀθανάτου
ΠΑΤΡΟΣ,
Οὐρανίου, Ἁγίου, Μάκαρος,
ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΕ,
ἐλθόντες ἐπὶ τὸν ἡλίου δύσιν,
ἰδόντες φῶς ἑσπερινόν,
ὑμνοῦμεν ΠΑΤΕΡΑ, καὶ ΥΙΟΝ, καὶ Ἅγιον
ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΘΕΟΥ,
ἄξιος εἶ ἐν πᾶσι καιροῖς ὑμνεῖσθαι φωναῖς
ὁσίαις
ΥΙΕ ΘΕΟΥ, Ζωὴν ὁ Διδούς·
διὸ ο κοσμός Σε δοξάζει·

Vid. Lyra Apostolica, p. 79.

CHAPTER V.

The Four Visions.

Proceeding now upon their way,
A narrow cleft before them lay;
The Hermit seized a torch, and led
Along the subterraneous bed
Of a small stream; which, when the snow
Ran melting to the vale below
From the tall mountains, flowed along
With foaming current, swift, and strong;
But now was dry, save that a thread
Of limpid water through the bed

Ran tinckling on, with many a leap
Into a cavern, wide, and deep;
Thence trickling o'er its rocky way,
In a wide basin, far from day,
The little, wandering, crystal flood
At length in solemn darkness stood.
The arched roof's stupendous height
Rose gloomily like blackest night,
Except, that here and there a gem
Reflected red the torch's gleam:
For, now, the Hermit held on high
His torch, that they might well descry
The wonders of the place, then said,
'Companions dear, be not afraid
For I must now in darksome night
Put out the torch's ruddy light.'
Then, while in darkness deep, profound,
And solemn stillness, (for no sound
Escaped from any) they remain;
A little noise, like falling rain,

Unbinds the stillness;—from the lake
A softened lustre seems to break;
Increasing, 'till the vault's vast height
Shines with a fair and pearly light;
Then all the jewelled roof became
O'erspread with a soft, lambent flame;
And then, upon their wondering sight
Came forth a Form, majestic, bright.
Calm was his mien, while, round his head
A sweet, celestial beauty played:
His heavenly form was clothed in white,
Of interwoven rays of light;
And folds fell over folds, and were
Like golden clouds in purple air,
Which circle round the sun's red ball,
And deck at eve heaven's roseate hall:
His wings of gold with silver blent
High beauty to his features lent,
And, under each soft feather, rays
Of subtle light unceasing blaze,

Fair as the stars, which oft display
Their lustre in the milky-way:
He spake;—and to their ears the sound
Was like sweet music, floating round
Upon the wavy lake at eve,
Playing, unwilling e'er to leave
Its kindred surface: and each word
Thrilled deeper than the song of bird,
That on some lowly hawthorn-tree
Fills all around with melody,
And, to the lonely traveller,
Proves a most welcome comforter.

And thus he said, 'Ye, who have come
Beneath this mystic, wondrous dome,
Come follow me, and I will shew
The secrets hidden here below.'

In solemn silence then they take
Their stand beside th' unruffled lake;
From which before their wondering eyes
A simple cottage seems to rise:

They enter in,—and, on a bed,
A wasted form is meekly laid,
With thin weak hands upon his breast
Folded in prayer; but closer pressed
When, now and then, a piercing pain
Ran rapidly through every vein:—
His words in broken accents fell,
And they could scarce their meaning tell;
And, by his side, his faithful wife
Sat, watching out the sparks of life.
A dark and dreadful being stood,
Like lion thirsting for his blood,
By his left side; whose horrid head
With ghastly wounds was overspread,
Whence streams of burning sulphur flow;—
His eyes glare with a dull red glow;
And intertwined in many a fold,
A scaly serpent-body rolled;
While from his evil mouth there fell
All the black thoughts and doubts of hell.

But, gently standing at his right,
An angel placid, holy, bright,
Undid each doubt, and calmed each fear,
And wiped away each rising tear;
Suggesting holy thoughts, he drew
A holy picture, fair and true,
Of heaven's serenity and peace;—
From sorrow, that it was release,
And entrance into holy bliss;
Yea, greater, better, more than this.

Then the bad spirit bade him cast
His anxious fears away at last,
Take no more thought,—he now was sure
To gain fair Eden's happy shore;—
That he had lived so long in faith,
He could not fall away in death.

But quickly came the angel there,
And holy words of awe he bare;
Bade him remember, that he might
Sin deeply ere the close of night.

And, therefore, he should persevere,
Serving his LORD with joy and fear;
That so he might accepted be,
And 'scape hell's deep, black misery.
They struggled thus until the hour
Fell like the gentlest springtide shower,
And summoned forth his soul away
From out its dwelling-place of clay:
And, then, the angel bore in love
His soul unto the joys above.
The lake lay placid as before,
And the first vision now was o'er.

The second now began. They saw
A sight that blanched each cheek with awe;
The great Archangel took his stand
Upon the foaming sea and land;
And cried that time should be no more,
That now was shut sweet Mercy's door.

Then, from the lofty heavens, the sound
Of trumpet made the earth rebound;
The graves flew open wide,—the wave
Those buried in its bosom gave;
And all arising haste to meet
The JUDGE, before the Judgment-seat.
Upon a Throne of purest white,
All glittering with radiant light,
He sat; while circling round His Throne
A glorious emerald-rainbow shone.

In anxious silence, bad and good,
Awaiting His just sentence, stood.
See! what a dreadful terror shakes
The sinner, when to death he wakes:
When, one by one, before him run
The sins that he hath ever done:—
And mercy gone!—he gasps with fear,
And flies to seek some shelter near;—
The rocks have fled,--the mountains gone,--
And, in the assembled world, alone

He feels the Judge's calm, stern eye
His inmost secret soul descry;
His very soul with chill despair
Seems frozen 'mid the blazing air.

But him, whose soul is tuned to love,
Until it sings like soft-voiced dove,
Bright Hope encourages, although
His inmost heart is bowed with awe;
His Faith in sight is swallowed up,
His Hope drinks deeply Joy's full cup,
And Love, sweet Love, intenser glows
As Fear hath fled, like summer snows.
The good and ill a chasm wide
Impassable doth now divide;
Then the just Judge, for deeds of love
Bids his meek saints ascend above;
Commands the wicked then to go
To the abyss of Hell below.
And, both departing join the throngs
Of ceaseless groans, or endless songs.

The former sink, where dismal groans,
And clanking chains, and woeful moans,
And sad laments, and ceaseless tears,
And curses dire, 'mid endless fears
And awful sounds, are ever heard;
Where, ever and anon, was reared
A huge and frightful serpent's head
Above the sulphur's burning bed,
Whose wiry, long, and hideous form
Was the insatiable worm
That never dies. Here, tortured, lay
Uncheered by one enlivening ray,
Satan's proud host, himself their head
Was in the very centre laid,
Where, misery on misery
Is ever growing, ne'er to die;
And one, long, piteous, fruitless cry
Is wailed throughout eternity.

But let us follow where the blest
Enjoy their holy, happy rest.
List! how the Allelujah rings,
As each o'erjoyed with rapture sings;
Higher and higher, as they go,
Still louder do their praises flow;
And still, eternal ages long,
Their joy is this celestial song,
'All Holy, Holy, Holy Three
Eternal, blessed TRINITY.'
Theirs is eternal rest, and peace,
From sin and sorrow 'tis release,
A Harbour from the storms of life,
A Citadel where is no strife;—
For poverty, 'tis boundless Wealth,
For sickness, ever youthful Health,
For loneliness, a band of friends,
Whose holy, gentle love ne'er ends.
Yea, more than these, and higher far
Than is from earth the furthest star,

As boundless as the infinite,
Is the unmeasured, deep delight
Wrapt in the beatific sight:
There, ages long the saints shall prove
The meaning of Eternal Love.

CHAPTER VI.

The Dangerous Valley.

Thus closed the vision. They are led
From these most awful scenes of dread,
And, by a narrow, rugged stair,
Ascend unto the upper air.
The dove-like morn with gentle wing
Awoke the early lark to sing;
The soft west breeze, o'er land and sea,
Poured forth a half-heard harmony;
A feathery mist had climbed the hill,
And was descending in a rill.

There, as o'erjoyed, they take their stand,
They see below them sea and land
All glowing with the morning light,
And looking glad with smiles so bright,
It seemed as if one grateful song
Was sailing merrily along.

Here, raised on high, extended was
A rudely-shapen, antique Cross:
By this the hermit took his stand,
And suddenly a heavenly band
Of holy angels gathered round,
And, to his shoulders firmly bound
Two glistening pinions, and with care
They raise him in the soft sweet air,
And he, with outstretched, eager wings,
Ascending, looks to heaven and sings.

Vincent and Agatho amazed,
Intently followed him, and gazed
Until, within the dark blue height
His form was lost to mortal sight.

Then Agatho to Vincent said,
"How pleasantly our time has sped,
When we have followed where he led:—
But let us now our course pursue,
For in the distance now I view
The gloomy mountains, whose dark hue
Half makes me tremble as I gaze:—
Yet still, around their height there plays
A soft pale light at times, which cheers,
And seems to dissipate my fears:
And see! upon the mountain's brow
Gleams out a Cross as white as snow.
Oh let us onward press, to gain,
In spite of fears, or doubts, or pain,
Those blissful fields, those happy lands,
Whereon the Cross celestial stands."
Then, both descend unto the plain;
Where dangers compass them again.
For, rising from a stagnant bog
Spread o'er the plain a thick, grey fog;

Which with its pestilential breath
Threatened all travellers with death.
It rose not from the plain, but lay
A few feet high, and seemed a sea
Becalmed; and to the aching sight
On all sides shewed a sad, dull white.
As long as e'er their eyes were bent
Upon the Cross, the mist was rent
In twain before them, and their way
Unclouded opened to the day:
But if, upon the Cross they ceased
To gaze, the mist was soon increased,
And rose in waves above their head,
And chilling terror in them bred:
Yet, ever as their eyes were turned
To seek the Cross, at first there burned
A few faint rays, which, struggling through,
Made them in gloominess pursue
Their weary way; as on they pressed
More eagerly the light increased,

Until at last, the mist dispelled,
The gloomy mountains they beheld.
The mountains rose all dark and grim,
Made, by a chilling vapour, dim,
O'erspread with narrow ways, o'er rocks,
Like those by which the browsing flocks
Of mountain-loving goats ascend;
Where sudden precipices lend
Intenser horror to the place:—
Yet might the skilful eye too trace
Some gently-rising hills, but they
Seemed scarcely to afford one way.
But here their angels came to lend
Their aid, as slowly they ascend.
The thin, cold vapour gathering, hides
All prospect as it onward rides;
And throws around their hearts so deep
And sad a chill, they well nigh weep.
But now, the setting sun's red blaze
Lights up with gold the rising haze:—

The night comes on,—the mist has fled,—
The full moon rides high overhead;
And peace seems on the earth to dwell,
As now across a quiet dell
They take their way. In stillness hushed
Lay every thing, the streamlet rushed
Over its little stones, and seemed,
As on its broken surface gleamed
The white moon-beams, no thing of earth,
So happy was its little mirth.
There, close beside the rippling flood,
Some unpretending dwellings stood,
All wrapt in silence. All was still
Upon the moor and piney hill.
They stood to gaze upon the scene,
So beautiful, and so serene;
Yet, as they gazed, a sullen sound,
Like the dull horn by beetle wound,
Disturbed the quiet. Now they hear
A clattering horseman riding near:

"Awake, awake! the flood!"—he said,
"The banks have burst—or ye are dead,
Hear ye not now the rushing flood:"
Then swiftly down the valley rode.
The sound increases more and more,
They hear distinctly now the roar
Of tossing waters, as they come
To threaten many a peaceful home.
Now on the stilly midnight rise
A hundred interningled cries:
One, unregardless of his life,
Wakes mother, sister, child, or wife;
Or, rousing from a placid sleep,
Stands listening to the torrent's sweep,
Benumbed with awe; then hurries fast
Until the angry flood has past.
Then, swifter than the summer-rain,
Or than the booming hurricane,
The waters come: the little rill,
One moment placed, soft and still,—

The next a raging river runs.
Each cottager the torrent shuns
As best he may. A mother there
Counts over with a trembling care
Her little ones;—Oh! how the blood,
In one tumultuous torrent, flowed
Back to her heart; "One is not here!—
Oh where is she? my daughter dear!"
Then through the flood, in anxious haste,
The desolated mother past,
With hands flung wildly in the air;
She sought the house,—she was not there!
Then, through the boiling waves wild roar,
She rushed with headlong speed once more
"Oh where is she? Oh tell me where?"
She asketh, running here and there.
"The child is safe; she rests with me,
Sleeps in my cottage peacefully:"
A neighbour cries, "to safety borne
Long since." No longer now forlorn,

Kneeling within the cottage rude
She weeps with fervent gratitude.
The storm past o'er,—yet ruined lay
That valley at the breaking day.
Then Agatho to Vincent said,
"Fear from my bosom now has fled;
The gloomy hills no longer awe;
For, from these scenes I courage draw,
No longer I delay to climb
The hills before the dewy prime.
Oh sacred love of mother! thou
Increasest all our joys below;
One word of due and reverent praise
To thee in gratitude I raise.
'Twas thou, that in mine infancy
With gentle care didst watch o'er me:
Thou wakedst then, that I might sleep,
Didst shed thy tears lest I should weep,
And, when my lips found words and strength
To tell my wants to thee at length,

Didst rather lead me in thy love
To speak of God, and heaven above.
How deeply on the child's pure mind,
E'er by the world it is refined,
The words of heavenly musing sink!
Perhaps more deeply than we think.
How many saint-like virtues are
The fruits of mother's early care:
Yea, to a mother's constant prayer
Thou art the gift, Augustine great!
And Anselm, on thy mountain-seat,
And he who spake with words of gold
Cheering the hearts of saints of old,
Among the list shall stand enrolled.

But though thus great is mother's love,
Thine, gracious LORD, is far above:
Hers is the shadowing of Thine,
The image of Thy Love Divine.
My panting heart with courage leaps,
And longs to mount these frowning steeps."

CHAPTER VII.

Conclusion.

Then, up they mount until their way
In two divided 'fore them lay:
One on the left was rough and steep,
The other took a gentle sweep;
Yet both before them seemed to run
In narrowed width directly on.
With hesitation, now, they stand,
And looked with care on either hand,
To go on either way they feared;—
When both their angels there appeared

To guide them. Agatho was led
Up to the mountain's rugged head;
Whilst Vincent on the smoother way
Was hastened on, without delay.
O'er barren rocks, through frozen snows,
And stagnant fens, the former goes;
Until a mighty castle's keep
Stood o'er a precipice, so steep
That, though the wind-dashed sea its base
For ever washed, you heard no trace
Of its deep sound, nor could the sight
Reach to the bottom from that height.
'Twas built of rough grey stone, and spread
Around a strange mysterious dread.
The way led onward to the gate,
Which rose in black and sombre state.
With trembling yet resolved step
He thither climbs, with many a leap;
But ere unto the gate he came,
A sudden, hot, and swift-tongued flame

Enveloped all the castle round:
Then quickly with a grating sound
The gate flew wide, and there appears
A sight, which fills his mind with fears.
For on an ebon horse sat one,
Like to an ancient Amazon;
For hair, her head was wrapt in flames,
Her massive shield 'swift death' proclaims
Her helmet wore a vulture-crest,
And ruddy was her flowing vest,
Her sword in crimson blood was dyed,
A troop of dogs ran by her side;
With wrathful looks she rode along,
Followed by a tumultuous throng;
Whose wild cries every neighbouring hill
With cold white fear, and terror fill.
Awed by this strange and fearful sight,
His impulse was to take to flight:
But then, he must his steps retrace,
And from the Cross thus turn his face:—

Resolved, at least to seek the Cross,
To fear no pain, to heed no loss,
He boldly presses forwards. She
Rides onwards, with Satanic glee,
And from her fire-crowned head a flame,
Swift like the lightening's flashes, came,
And seized meek-hearted Agatho;
And, with one rapid deadly blow.
Bore him away from earth below;
Yea, gentle Angels waited near,
His conquering soul away to bear
To the fair gardens of the blest,
Where for a season he might rest.

Vincent went on a gentle slope,
Guarded by blue-eyed peaceful Hope,
Where Autumn, o'er the expanded fields,
A rich, and full thankoffering yields;
The fruits hung ripened on the trees,
The stream, just rippled by the breeze,
Flowed quietly along, deep, clear,

And broad. While golden Autumn sear
Shook all its honours on its breast,
That there they might in silence rest.
Each thought within his soul was peace,
Yet did his onward steps ne'er cease;
Until the slow-declining day
Shed softer light upon his way.
Onwards he went, unfaltering, calm,
Until a cloud perfumed with balm
Slowly concealed him from the sight,
Ere daylight yielded to the night.
Borne on by angel-hands he sings,
(As to the fields of joy with wings
Spread wide on either side he flies,)
Glad Eden's wondrous melodies.
There, happy, 'tis his sweet employ
With love to wait the day of joy.
But one word more. The setting sun
Upon the Church-spire brightly shone;
When, closed the warrior's glorious strife,

'The Resurrection of the Life'
Cheers those who mourn him gone; and
when,
Removed from sight of mortal men,
His form, consigned to holy ground,
Draws crowds of pondering angels round,
Faith, Hope, and Love together join,
And form a harmony divine.
The peaceful sun sets in the west;
The thrush, upon its featherd nest
Sings o'er his head one deep full note,
And as its echoes onward float
Listens awhile, then without fear
Sleeps, as the heavens, expanding, clear,
And not a cloud remains, but all
Is still within th' eternal Hall.

MARK THE PERFECT MAN
AND BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT;
FOR THE END OF THAT MAN IS
PEACE.

EXPLANATION OF THE PRINCIPAL TYPES.

CHAPTER I.

The Lake reflecting Heaven; is Holy Baptism, where a person is born again from above, according to St. John ch. iii. 3.; ἐὰν μή τις γενεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν. κ. τ. λ.

The Morning, is typical of our LORD, who is called "the Day-spring from on high."

The Ruby-looking Lake, is His Blood, wherewith we are washed in Holy Baptism.

The lofty Tower upon the Hill, is the Church, which is founded upon a Rock.

The Tree, is the Cross, according to the saying in the Ancient Church, "By Water and Wood Salvation came to man."

The Angel, is the guardian angel of the Child.

The way from the Lake to the Hillock, is childhood.

The Hillock, the beginning of Youth, where the pleasures of childhood begin to fade.

The Temple, is the Church.

The Benediction, is the Grace conferred in confirmation.

CHAPTER II.

The Violets of Pleasure fading, and the Night-shade springing up instead, is to signify, that if we look pleasure steadily in the face and heed it not, it will shew what it is really composed of, namely Death.

When suddenly his Angel came, &c. compare Bishop Ken's Evening Hymn.

> "Oh may my Guardian while I sleep,
> Close to my bed his vigils keep,
> His love angelical instil,
> Stop all the avenues of ill.
>
> May he celestial joy *rehearse*
> And thought to thought with me *converse*,
> Or in my stead, all the night long,
> Sing to my GOD a grateful song."

The Strength which he so humbly sought, is the Holy Communion.

The captive Knight, is one who has completely given himself up to the dominion of sin; and unrepenting though remorseful dies, by swift destruction. See Proverbs i. 20—33.

The Storm, is to rouse him from his sleep of sin, but it only makes him pray to his enemies, and therefore in vain.

CHAPTER III.

The Valley full of rocks, is typical of the innumerable dangers and difficulties which beset our path to Heaven.

The Arbour, signifies the neglect of watchfulness, and therefore they are subjected to temptation, slight at first but stronger afterwards, but they are delivered by GOD's Grace; the Water being typical of the Grace of the HOLY GHOST. See St. John ch. vii. 38, 39.

The Abbey, signifies the preparation which is necessary for the higher Walk of Faith. And also, the fulness of Virtues, which the Christian must possess, wanting in none. St. James ch. ii. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter for the most part explains itself. As a whole, it signifies that the contemplation of natural objects in a religious way, leads to that of more important and heavenly truths.

That make the woods and deserts wild Rejoice. See Isaiah XXXV. 1.

CHAPTER V.

Contains the Four Visions of Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.

The Narrow Cleft, &c., signifies the difficulty of fixing the attention in holy Meditation, which is best nourished in silence and in scenes of awe.

There is eternal rest and peace, compare Bishop Andrewes' Devotions,—fourth day.

> "For Thou art, O LORD,
> The Succour of the succourless,
> The Hope of the hopeless,
> The Saviour of the tempest-tost,
> The Harbour of the voyager,
> The Physician of the sick."

CHAPTER VI.

Morning, is the proper time for Meditation that may soar, as the hermit, on Angel's Wings to Heaven.

The gloomy Mountains signify Death, yet the true follower of the Lord Jesus, when he sees the Cross, is gladdened, and hastens onwards in his spiritual course.

The Fog, signifies the subtle temptations which attack those who have made considerable progress in the Spiritual Life.

The light increased, 'the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Prov. iv. 18.

The little tale which follows is *true*, and is given to shew how earthly love may overcome great dangers and difficulties, and therefore much more heavenly love.

CHAPTER VII.

The two ways, into which their path now divides, signify a peaceful and a violent death.

Agatho is prepared by roughness for *persecution*, and dies a Martyr.

The Amazon, is a Persecution.

Vincent's Death is gentle, passing away from the earth almost, as it were, by degrees. See Preface.

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